

9/11 Health Bill Reintroduced in Congress

Wednesday, 04 February 2009

Washington, D.C. – Today, Reps. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Peter King (R-NY), and Michael McMahon (D-NY) reintroduced bipartisan legislation to address the health crisis caused by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. H.R. 847, the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, would provide medical monitoring and treatment for those exposed to toxins released by the collapse of the World Trade Center towers. The bill would also provide compensation for economic losses due to illnesses or injuries caused by the attacks.

The previous version of the bill was set to be considered by the House last fall but because of the financial crisis and other factors, it had to be delayed. The Members of Congress are hopeful that the bill will have strong bipartisan support when it is voted on by the House in the coming months. In addition, during his presidential campaign President Barack Obama signaled his strong support for helping the heroes and heroines of 9/11.

“Thousands lost their lives in the 9/11 attacks, but in the years that followed thousands more lost their health. This bill provides proper care to those who are suffering and demonstrates that America will not abandon its first responders and all those affected,” Rep. Maloney said. “I thank Speaker Pelosi and my colleagues in the New York delegation for their dedication to fulfilling America’s moral responsibility to care for those who were harmed by the terrorist attacks on our nation.”

“Today, more than seven years after 9/11, it is more essential than ever that we take care of the first responders and area residents, workers and students who have become sick as a result of the attacks,” said Rep. Nadler. “With this new Administration and new Congress, we now have the opportunity to right some of the wrongs of the past. This bi-partisan legislation will go a tremendous distance toward showing our responders the respect and appreciation they deserve, and it will make good on our collective responsibility to care for those community members who needlessly suffered the ill effects of toxic dust.”

“The heroes of 9/11 became sick after working in the dust cloud of Ground Zero to save the lives of others,” said Rep. King. “It is our duty to develop a plan to monitor and care for these responders. I fully support the establishment of the World Trade Center Health Program and will continue to do all I can to ensure that the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act becomes law.”

“Eight and a half years ago our country witnessed the most terrible terrorist attack on American soil,” said Rep. McMahon. “After those devastating events, many New Yorkers – as well as people from other states who came to New York to aid those in need – emerged as heroes. They worked tirelessly, sorting through debris, searching for survivors, comforting strangers in their darkest moments. They did not turn their backs on us in our time of need and we cannot turn our backs on them. There is really no other option but to provide proper health care for all those first responders who are ill as a result of the selfless aid they provided after the 9/11 attacks. I am proud to be a part of this bill with my colleagues from New York and urge all those in Congress to remember New York’s heroes.”

#

Fact Sheet on 9/11 Health Issues and H.R. 847:

What is the problem?

- Thousands of first responders and others exposed to the toxins of Ground Zero are now sick and need our help. These include New York firefighters, EMTs and police, construction workers, clean-up workers, residents, area workers, and school children, among others.
- Although most of these people live in the New York/New Jersey area, at least 10,000 people came from around the country to help in the aftermath of the attacks. They hail from all 50 states and nearly every congressional district. Many are sick and others are very concerned about their health. (Please see a map of Registry enrollments nationwide and a list of enrollments in each congressional district.)
- Their illnesses include respiratory and gastrointestinal system conditions such as asthma, interstitial lung disease, chronic cough and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), and mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- More than 400,000 people are believed to have been exposed to toxins from the World Trade Center site.
- Nearly 16,000 responders and at least 2,700 community members are currently sick and receiving treatment. More than 40,000 responders are currently in medical monitoring. 71,000 individuals are enrolled in the WTC Health Registry.
- Those who suffered economic losses as a result of their WTC-related illnesses need and deserve compensation, but have no alternative to the current litigation system.
- The WTC contractors and the City of New York are being sued by over 10,000 people who are sick because of Ground Zero toxins. They face great financial loss because they were asked to help at Ground Zero in the country's time of need.

H.R. 847 would address the 9/11 health crisis by:

- Providing medical monitoring and treatment to WTC responders and community members (area workers, residents, students and others) who were exposed to toxins released at Ground Zero.
- Building on the existing monitoring and treatment program by delivering expert medical treatment for these unique exposures at Centers of Excellence.
- Providing for research into WTC-related health conditions.
- Reopening the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund to provide compensation for economic losses and harm as an alternative to the current litigation system.

- Providing liability protections for the WTC contractors and the City of New York.